

Choosing a meaningful research topic for your dissertation or master's thesis can be a challenge.

Here are some criteria to help you decide.

After years of **graduate school**, choosing a great **topic** for your **doctoral dissertation** or **master's thesis** may feel like one of the biggest pressures yet. You're going to be spending months and perhaps years on this research project, and completion of your **PhD** or **master's degree** is contingent upon your success.

Take a deep breath. Yes, choosing a these topic is a difficult decision, but follow your instincts and you'll find your way to an appropriate and meaningful topic. Here are some criteria to keep in mind when choosing a dissertation or thesis topic.

- **Choose a topic you love.** This may be the most important criteria. You're going to be spending so much time with this project, and your quality of life will be much better if these hours are spent enjoyably. What's more, the quality of your research, writing, and arguments will be much better if you feel genuine passion for your work. Choose a topic you find both fascinating and socially significant. Never let someone pressure you into writing about a certain topic!
- **Pick a topic that will be helpful in your ministry/career path.** If you are going into ministry or currently in ministry, choose topic that is applicable to your area of ministry and will promote growth in that area. If your goal is the academic area of ministry pick a topic that you can easily modify into journal articles or a book, and that will lend itself well to future research. If you want to work at a teaching oriented institution, consider a topic you can use in the classroom.
- **Find a topic that establishes your niche in your field.** Do your research and find a topic that fits into existing bodies of literature, but that builds upon theory and expands it.
- **Choose research that is unique.** Do significant research to make sure this topic has not been done before. Be creative and choose an idea that stands out from the pack as original and innovative.
- **Pick a topic that you already have some expertise about.** This will help preserve your sanity and get you out the door faster. This isn't the time to explore a brand new area. Along the way, take coursework and write class papers that will help you write your dissertation or thesis.
- **Pick a manageable topic.** This is a huge project, but it isn't your life's research. If necessary, your advisor will help you narrow down your topic so that you don't remain in graduate school for many long years.
- **Theses format to follow as outlined in “A Manual For Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations”** by Kate L. Turabin (6th or 7th Edition).



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THESES TOPIC REQUEST FORM

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DAYTIME PHONE _____

PROGRAM ENROLLED IN _____

THESES TITLE _____

POINTS THAT WILL BE INCLUDED IN YOUR PAPER:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

OTHER THINGS TO BE DISCUSSED:

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY UNIVERSITY OFFICIAL ONLY:

TOPIC APPROVED? _____

COMMENTS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

Please note: **NEW REQUIREMENT:** When submitting your theses for final approval/grading, all theses papers must also be saved on a 3-1/2 Floppy Disk or a CD-RW disk in Microsoft Word Document.